

Photo: VOM International



The Voice of the Martyrs Canada



AFRICA'S DISPLACED PEOPLE

Serving the Persecuted Church for More Than 50 Years | March 2024

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN NIGERIA?

By Floyd A. Brobbel
CEO for The Voice of the Martyrs Canada



Photo: shutterstock/am_zewis

“Teach me Your way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name.”

Psalm 86:11 ESV

Over the years, Boko Haram terrorists and militant Fulani Muslims have been relentlessly attacking Christians throughout Northern Nigeria. Nearly all followers of Jesus in the northeastern parts of the country have lost family members and/or friends as a result of the numerous assaults perpetrated by these Islamic terrorist groups. Due to the extreme violence, entire church congregations have been displaced from their communities, and many pastors were forced to leave the region. Today, thousands of homeless Christians remain in camps designated for internally displaced people.

With few schools able to function because of the hostility, families are concerned about their children’s education. In fact, life in general has become a constant struggle, making it very difficult for Christians to find food in various areas. Famine is a constant threat for these uprooted communities in the north. As a result of the ongoing Islamist insurgency, even the lives of farmers who want to continue their livelihoods are at tremendous risk. Those who did make attempts to return to their farms were tragically killed by militant Fulanis. In addition, numerous villages and farmlands have been confiscated by Islamist militias. These conditions make Nigeria one of the most violent places in the world to live as a Christian, requiring great courage and faith for



Photo: VOM Canada

those who continue to worship and serve Christ openly. Yet, despite these many hardships, the Gospel continues to advance throughout the Muslim-dominated northern states.

In 2006, Pastor Enoch Atiyaye was ministering in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, when local Muslims launched a protest to denounce a series of cartoons that appeared in a Danish newspaper. The cartoons were considered blasphemous because they depicted the prophet Muhammad (the spiritual founder and leader of Islam) negatively. The demonstration started peacefully. However, by the end of the day,

approximately 50 followers of Jesus had been brutally murdered by swords, machetes and arson attacks.

Pastor Enoch’s friend and colleague, Reverend Gajare, was killed in the attack. Protestors smashed through the wall of the church building and attacked the pastor. After stabbing him and hanging tires around his neck, they doused Reverend Gajare with gasoline and

set him alight. He was burned to ashes before anyone could save him. The attackers then ransacked and burned down the church building.

Following the attack, VOM workers visited Pastor Enoch and asked, “As we stand in the middle of all of this destruction, how does that make you feel as a Christian?” The faithful pastor replied...

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Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

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plus Art Gallery and Retreat ads:
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and her creative team.



Photo: VOM International

"As a Christian, it is something great to know that, for the sake of the Gospel, I am counted worthy to be part of the body of Christ; that I could be persecuted in my own time. Jesus never promised me that everything would be easy. We know from the Scriptures that persecution will definitely come. So, from the spiritual perspective, yes, God is counting us worthy to be part of this thing. That is something to give thanks to God for. He told us to give thanks in all things. So, even in this thing, we still know that we can praise our God."

Such a perspective in the midst of tremendous suffering, loss and continued persecution can only come from one who has been taught to walk in the way of truth, regardless of the world's opposition. Pastor Enoch is wholeheartedly devoted to serving God in this violent region to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the aftermath of the deadly attack, he called upon the church to forgive their persecutors. "The teachings of Jesus ask us to forgive them," Pastor Enoch announced. "Jesus was on the cross and prayed, *'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'* Now, even in times like these, difficult as they may look, we cannot make any progress as the church unless we forgive.... The God we serve teaches that we should forgive those who persecute us, those who despitely use us, and those who abuse us. We have no reason not to forgive them. The love of Christ gives us the grace to forgive these individuals, and we are praying for them – even praying for their salvation."

As you read this month's issue of *The Voice of the Martyrs Canada* publication, I pray that you will be greatly encouraged by the testimonies of victory that have risen from the ashes of persecution. May our hearts be united to fear the name of the Lord, so together – as one body – we will faithfully walk in His way of truth (Psalm 86:11) and bring glory to His name.

Grace and peace,



The goals of VOMC are expressed in our "Ministry Purposes" as follows:

1. To encourage and empower persecuted Christians to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. To give practical relief and spiritual support to the families of Christian martyrs (Matthew 25:36).
3. To equip persecuted Christians to love and win to Christ those opposed to the Gospel (Romans 12:14).
4. To help believers rebuild their lives and Christian witness in countries where they have formerly suffered oppression (Nehemiah 1:3; 2:5).
5. To promote the fellowship of all believers by informing the world of the faith and courage of persecuted Christians, thereby inspiring believers to a deeper level of commitment to Christ and involvement in His Great Commission (Hebrews 13:3; Galatians 6:2).

Spending of funds is confined to board-approved programs and projects. Each restricted contribution designated towards a board-approved program or project will be used as designated with the understanding that when the need for such a program or project has been met, or cannot be completed for any reason determined by the board, the remaining restricted contributions designated for such program or project will be used where needed most. Gifts from individual donors of \$10 and more are acknowledged and receipted with an official receipt for income tax purposes.



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Article Photos: VOM Canada

Bringing Hope and Help to Widows in Nigeria

By Greg Musselman, Minister-at-Large for The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

Life for Christians in certain remote regions of Nigeria can be extremely dangerous. Many believers have been attacked and killed by Islamic militants simply because of their faith in Jesus. Pastor Allabura Audu was one of them. The 49-year-old Christian minister led an evangelical church in Kasuwa Magani, a village located in the southern part of Kaduna State. While visiting the city of Kaduna (the capital of the state), I sat down with Pastor Allabura's widow, Victoria, to discuss what took place in their community at the time of the attack; a tragic event that not only dramatically changed her life, but also the lives of their four children.

It was September 5th, 2020, when Fulani militants brutally attacked their community. "We had gone to bed early, and woke up at around 1:40 a.m. from a noise we heard at the back of the house," Victoria explains. "My husband went out, and I heard a "pop, pop" [sound] and became scared. My boys wanted to

go out, but...I said, 'Rather than go outside, let us pray.'" While the Christian woman and her children were praying to the Lord, they began to hear shouting and crying. As the sounds became louder and louder, Victoria went outside where she discovered two dead bodies lying on the ground close to their house.



The late Pastor Allabura with his wife Victoria.

Victoria checked the lifeless bodies to see if one of them happened to be Pastor Allabura. "I didn't see my husband among them," she recounts. "But then I saw another group of people crying far from where I was [standing]." When Victoria went over to see if her husband was there, some of their church members urged her to go back home. It was then that

Victoria instinctively knew Pastor Allabura had been murdered. "I didn't find it easy at all...I cried..." she says when recalling that dreadful night. "It was a terrible experience for me. I'm conscious that death is inevitable, and I know that if God wanted to protect and stop my husband from being killed, He would



Podcast host Greg Musselman praying for Victoria (right) and Laitu, a widow whose husband was also martyred for his faith.

have done so. But He decided to allow it for a reason. I accept that, and it hasn't affected my relationship with God."

As a long-time follower of Jesus, Victoria knows that the Bible teaches us to forgive our enemies, even those who do terrible things to us. Yet, how was she able to forgive those who murdered her loving husband, and left her children without a father? "When it happened, I wasn't thinking about forgiveness," she admits. "I wanted those [attackers] brought to me so I could look at them and see what kind of people they are. But then, later on, I asked God to forgive them and change [their hearts]." It was clear that Victoria had chosen to forgive those who murdered her husband, and was able to trust the Lord to sustain, provide and be with her grieving family in the midst of their hardships.

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, in partnership with Christian Solidarity Worldwide Nigeria, invited Victoria to take part in a skills-training course for Christian widows, but she decided to pass the opportunity on to her daughter, Blessing. "It's a very, very important program..." Victoria acknowledges. "[Blessing] was later admitted to a school, and the [provided] sewing machine has been great, not just for my daughter but for our entire family. Most significantly, when my daughter was going to school, she took the sewing machine [with her] so that while she was studying, she could do more work. The money she receives from sewing sustains her."

While Victoria and the many other Christians who have lost family members due to the ongoing violence in Nigeria are thankfully on the road to recovery, they still need our support and prayers. "We ask for prayers, especially for God to help us...in view of all these things that have happened," Victoria concludes. "Please ask Christians in Canada to pray that God will strengthen us and increase our faith in Him. Thank you." To watch the documentary featuring Victoria's testimony, go to www.vomcanada.com/video/Victoria.

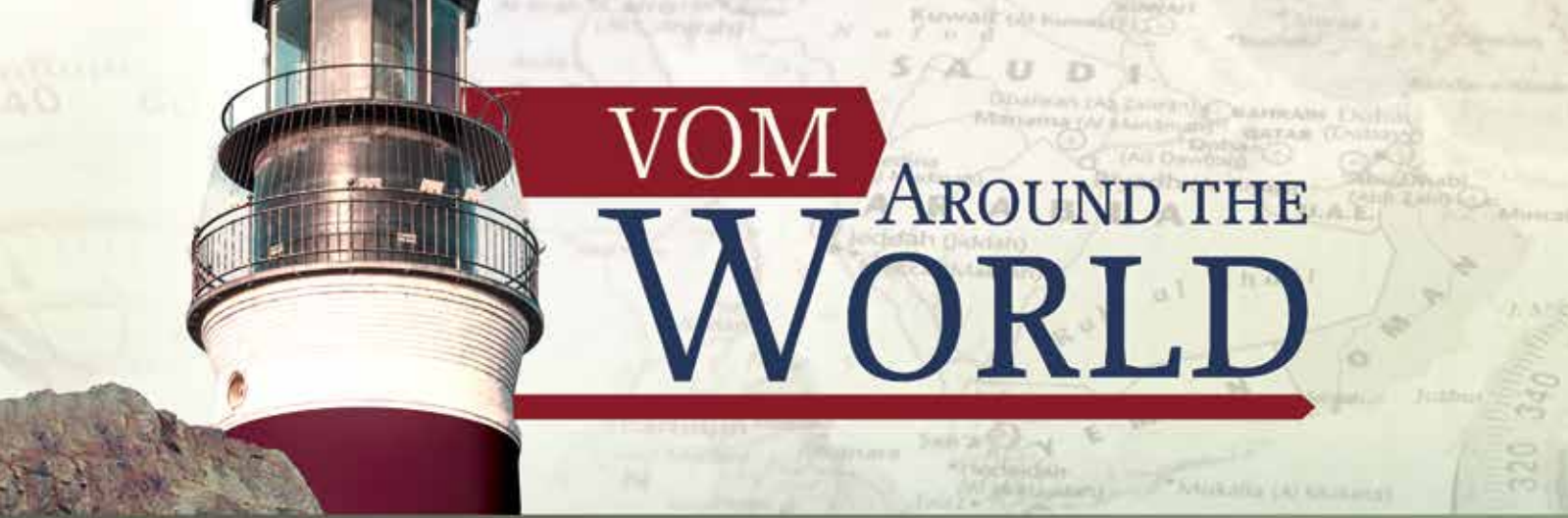
Report on Nigeria's Current Crisis



During the week of Christmas, more than 240 Christians were murdered in Nigeria's Plateau State, according to the Stefanos Foundation based in Jos. The December 2023 massacre, referred to as "Black Christmas," is one of the latest in a series of attacks against innocent followers of Jesus. According to the Intersociety for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law, an organization based in the southeastern Nigerian city of Onitsha, more than 52,000 Christians have been murdered in Nigeria since 2009. Yet, despite the staggering levels of violence, much of the world appears to be unresponsive to the plight of believers in Africa's most populous nation.

While reporting on the situation in Nigeria, VOMC's Greg Musselman spoke with Mark Lipdo, the Founder and Program Coordinator for Stefanos Foundation. This Christian organization is dedicated to helping believers in Nigeria who are being persecuted for their faith. During his conversation with Greg, Mark provides further information on the violent attacks that took place in Plateau State and discusses the reasons behind the recurring brutality.

To view this podcast interview, visit: www.vomcanada.com/video/Attacks



NIGERIA: Food Aid Distribution

“...if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted...then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday.”

~ Isaiah 58:10 NKJV

In Nigeria, the continued violent religious attacks on Christian communities by Fulani militants have led to the forced displacement of thousands of surviving believers. Unfortunately, the country’s present economic situation has only multiplied the hardships being experienced by these many displaced followers of Jesus, who are now struggling to meet their families’ daily food needs. Those hosting the displaced families are also being affected by the crisis as they deal with the increased financial burden.

The resulting malnutrition of Nigeria’s Christian population has led to high mortality rates – especially among children between the ages of two to five years – and health challenges for pregnant/nursing mothers and the elderly. To come alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering immensely for their faith and struggling to feed their families, VOMC is partnering with the Ontario Christian Gleaners organization to provide dehydrated vegetable mixes and fruit snacks that are nutritious, versatile and easily transported to areas of need.

The ministry began facilitating its initial food distribution project in collaboration with the Ontario Christian Gleaners during 2021, in response to the country’s extreme hunger crisis. In order to determine which families were most at risk, one of our other ministry partners, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Nigeria (CSWN), profiled thousands of Nigerian households. After identifying those that were most vulnerable, we were able to provide sufficient food aid to over 1,266 households.

Although the initial project distributions were successful, the needs of many more vulnerable Nigerians have since become increasingly evident due to the

country’s deteriorating economic conditions. It has now reached the point of another urgently needed intervention, for thousands of other once self-sufficient individuals and their families are no longer able to meet their basic food requirements. Thankfully, VOMC is able to partner again with Ontario Christian Gleaners to provide the daily sustenance that’s necessary for these Nigerians’ survival, while also ensuring they obtain optimal health nutritionally.

Though shipping has become increasingly challenging due to Nigeria’s complicated geo-political situation, God has provided a method for us to transport a 20-foot shipping container filled with nutritious dehydrated food products that will nourish and strengthen those facing severe malnutrition and hunger. This project aims to distribute the food supply to approximately 1,500 households in four different Nigerian states. With an average of five people per household, a total of approximately 7,500 individuals will be supported by this latest relief effort.



Article Photos: VOM Canada

Continued on page 11...

TABLE TALK NIGERIA

FINDING COMMON GROUND

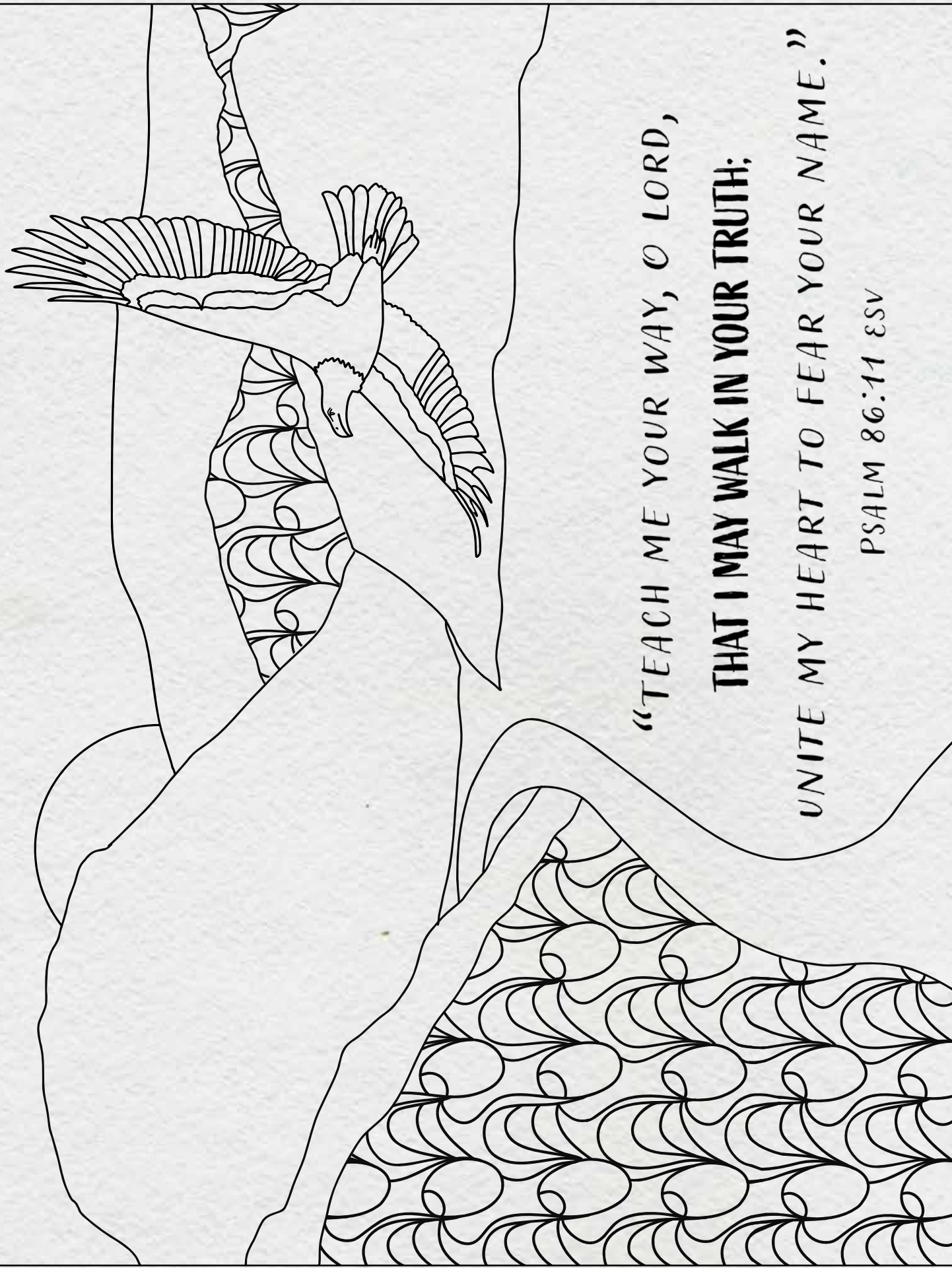
How to Play: Complete the maze by finding the lowest common denominator between the two fractions. Follow the answer's path to collect cooking ingredients. An answer key, along with a printable recipe, is available at: vomcanada.com/TableTalkNigeria

Start!



The unlike fractions in the maze cannot be added together without first finding the common denominator. In the same way, when we share our faith with others, we must find common ground before we can effectively reach them.

COLLECTED
INGREDIENTS:



**“TEACH ME YOUR WAY, O LORD,
THAT I MAY WALK IN YOUR TRUTH;
UNITE MY HEART TO FEAR YOUR NAME.”**

PSALM 86:11 ESV

HIS WAY “Teach me Your way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name.” Psalm 86:11 ESV

MARCH 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 BRUNEI While oil wealth has ensured that few Bruneians lack material necessities, pray that they will realize their need for Christ.	4 LIBYA Pray that the Holy Spirit will move in the lives of citizens throughout the country, resulting in multitudes of new believers.	5 PHILIPPINES Pray for the families of pastors, evangelists and missionaries who have been killed for their faith.	6 NEPAL Bible distribution is difficult in Nepal's mountainous areas. Pray for creative, effective ways to deliver God's Word to these regions.	7 MOROCCO Pray that Christians will have opportunities for fellowship and to encourage one another.	8 ISRAEL (INCLUDING WEST BANK & GAZA) Continue to pray for Pauline Ayyad (whose husband was martyred in 2007) and her children.	9 LEBANON Praise God for the fruitful efforts of churches that are reaching out to Syrian refugees with the hope of the Gospel!
10 IRAN Pray that online ministries and Christian broadcasts will reach many with the Gospel and disciple new believers.	11 AFGHANISTAN Pray for peace, comfort and strength on behalf of Afghan Christians in refugee camps who feel isolated.	12 CHINA Pray that Christians will lay a firm foundation for their children, as the Biblical education of minors is prohibited.	13 CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC Pray that emergency relief supplies will reach Christians who have been forced from their homes and communities.	14 MOZAMBIQUE Pray that Christians who have been targeted in the Cabo Delgado insurgency will experience Christ's healing and peace.	15 BANGLADESH Pray for ministry workers like Omar and Rojina, who are taking God's Word to Muslims in remote regions.	16 TUNISIA Pray that Tunisians will be receptive to the message of the Gospel.
17 BURKINA FASO Pray for Christian women like Assetou who are persecuted by family members and pressured to marry animists.	18 KAZAKHSTAN Pray for the spread and growth of house churches throughout Kazakhstan.	19 EGYPT Pray for churches facing extreme hostility from militant members of the Islamic community.	20 MYANMAR (BURMA) Pray for 11 Christian families from the Palauing tribe who have been pressured by villagers to renounce their faith.	21 DR CONGO Pray that Christians in eastern Congo will be able to worship in their churches freely and without risk of attacks.	22 MAURITANIA Pray that Christian converts from Islam will be protected from arrest and imprisonment.	23 DJIBOUTI Pray that more churches will be allowed to operate throughout this Northeast African nation.
24 AZERBAIJAN Praise God for Christians who are faithfully proclaiming the Gospel despite legal pressure and possible fines.	25 KENYA Pray for the families of Kenyan Christians who have been killed by Muslim militants.	26 BAHRAIN Pray that Christians will receive God's wisdom and anointing when sharing the "Good News" of the Gospel.	27 MALDIVES Pray that believers at risk of imprisonment or expulsion for following Christ will be wise and courageous witnesses.	28 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES Pray that churches will continue to faithfully proclaim the Gospel despite governmental prohibitions.	29 IRAQ Pray for Christian converts from Islam dealing with opposition from family members, the government and extremist groups.	30 LAOS Pray for Christians like Phan and Yun who have been rejected or evicted for their faith.
31 SOMALIA Young people in Somalia are becoming disenchanted with Islam amid ongoing al-Shabab attacks. Pray for their salvation.						

Background: Shutterstock/artshock

Scan to access Digital Calendar





IN THE KNOW: NIGERIA

WEIGH IN

1

Having a large family is highly desired in Nigeria. Often, couples will have as many children as they are able, resulting in some families having about a dozen members.

What are some benefits of having a large family in Canada compared to that of a similar size in a Nigerian household? What would some of the challenges be? Does living rurally versus in a city become an important factor when determining the various benefits/challenges?

2

Nigeria's population is 46 percent Christian. However, due to the presence of Islamic militants in the north, Christian persecution in Nigeria was ranked sixth on the 2023 *World Watch List*. Additionally, according to Statista, Nigeria has the third highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa.

Islamic militants in Northern Nigeria often raid Christian communities, resulting in families being homeless and/or forced to live in IDP camps. With so many in the country displaced (including non-Christians), what role could followers of Jesus have in these camps? Find a Bible verse that would comfort *and* encourage you to seize opportunities for ministry if you happened to be in this situation.

WAY OUT

Let's begin phase two of the dinner party! First, create a custom name tag for each of your guests and include a "weigh-in question" on the reverse side. These weigh-in questions will be excellent conversation starters and discussion points while your guests are enjoying the meal. Next, prepare and follow the recipe for the Nigerian "Jollof Rice." During the evening, present the allegory comparing the similarities between Islam and Christianity, which are listed in this month's "One Way" section. At the end of the dinner party, offer up a prayer for more opportunities to share the Gospel with your Muslim neighbours. The recipe and name tags with the weigh-in questions are available at: vomcanada.com/TableTalkNigeria

RECOMMENDED READS

Around the World with Matt and Lizzy – Nigeria

by Julie C. Beemer (Children)

Let's Eat! Mealtime Around the World by Lynne Marie

(Children)

Byang Kato by Simonetta Carr (Children)

ONE WAY

Finding common ground is key when sharing your faith with others. With that in mind, let's learn some of the similarities between Islam and Christianity through the allegories below relating to the featured recipe.

Creation: Vegetables are tangible elements in a recipe, adding unique tastes and textures to the whole meal. Like the vegetables within the dish, the belief in God as Creator is a tangible element that flavours the entire belief system of those following either Christianity or Islam. Both religions believe that God created the heavens and the earth, giving purpose and meaning to all created things.

The Patriarchs: The spices in this recipe complement the other ingredients, enhancing the flavour of the entire dish. The purpose of each spice is not to overpower the taste of the other ingredients but to allow the other flavours to shine. In the same way, the common recognition of the Old Testament patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – complement the other beliefs held by both Muslims and Christians. In both religions, this shared belief is not meant to 'overpower' the other core elements but to highlight God's purposes for humanity.

One God: Much like how the rice is foundational to our featured recipe, the belief in one God is foundational to both Islam and Christianity. One of the core principles of Islam is the belief in one God, so much so that it is written on the outside of most mosques. Likewise, the belief in one God is foundational to the Christian faith. Although the identity, name and character of that one God differs significantly, this can be a common place to begin an interesting discussion between Christians and Muslims.

Final Judgement: The sauce completes the recipe, making the dish more than that of simply rice and veggies, but a rich and tasty meal known as "Jollof Rice." In a similar way, the belief that God is coming back at the end of human history provides a focal point and specific flavour to the rest of a person's faith beliefs. Both Muslims and Christians believe that God will come back to judge the world. What that looks like varies dramatically, but what a beautiful discussion could respectfully take place over those details.

Sources:

<https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/nigeria/>

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1237374/number-of-internally-displaced-persons-in-nigeria/>

Finding Common Ground Solutions:

1/3 & 1/6 = 6 Tomato

1/10 & 2/3 = 30 Onion

5/6 & 4/5 = 30 Peppers

5/12 & 1/4 = 12 Spices

2/3 & 3/7 = 21 Stock

1/2 & 7/9 = 18 Butter

1/6 & 1/2 = 6 Rice

4/8 & 3/7 = 14 Salt & Pepper

2/15 & 1/5 = 15 Hot Pepper

3/11 & 1/3 = 33 Oil

3/9 & 1/3 = 3 Bay Leaves



God has provided a method for us to transport...nutritious dehydrated food products that will nourish and strengthen those facing severe malnutrition and hunger.



...continued from page 6

To properly identify vulnerable communities and individuals, CSWN will once again be diligently conducting a “comprehensive needs assessment.” Following this, a robust system for beneficiary verification will be established to ensure that those genuinely in need can receive the necessary assistance. Through the application of equitable distribution practices, multiple distribution points will be efficiently utilized to prevent the overconcentration of provisions at any one particular location. Additionally, during the distributions, our ministry team will conduct brief educational sessions with the project’s recipients to provide guidance on the proper use, preparation and nutritional benefits of the dehydrated food products.

Since the distribution of this food aid will be occurring as you read this report, we ask that you please partner with us in prayer. Pray that the shipment to Nigeria arrives to its destination in good time and that it will be safely delivered into the hands of those in need. Also prayerfully uphold our dedicated in-country ministry partners, asking the Lord to give them wisdom, protection and supernatural strength as they coordinate all of the various distributions.

Finally, please join us in praying that each recipient of this relief project will be strengthened, not only physically but also spiritually, as they tangibly experience our Heavenly Father’s unfailing love, provision and care. 🙏

ART GALLERY SHOWING

THEME: HEART HEALTH Matthew 5:8 & Proverbs 4:23

BEST IN SHOW: YOUTH (13-18 YRS) \$250

BEST IN SHOW: ADULTS (19+) \$250

Please send your original artwork submission depicting the theme “HEART HEALTH” by 5 PM (EST) on June 10th, 2024. Find more Art Gallery details at: www.vomcanada.com/ArtGalleryShowing.



Women's Ministry Retreat Olympic Faith Ontario

Training women in the footrace of overcoming hurdles and standing boldly for their faith in Canada...while partnering to heal, disciple, and equip at-risk Christians with the tools needed to carry out the Great Commission as Christ-centred community leaders.



MAY
17-19
2024



\$190 Early Bird
(until March 15th, 2024)
\$200 Regular



CIRCLE SQUARE RANCH
Big Clear River, 1361 Price Rd.
Arden, ON K0H 1B0



REGISTER:

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events@vomcanada.org
1-888-298-6423

SCAN TO REGISTER!



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MAY
24-26
2024



\$215 Early Bird
(until March 22nd, 2024)
\$225 Regular



RIVER'S EDGE
5038 Township Rd. 295A
Cremona, AB T0M 0R0



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SCAN TO REGISTER!



Liberia:

RESCUING ABANDONED CHRISTIAN CHILDREN FROM EXTREME HARDSHIPS



shutterstock/Lucian Coman

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"

Matthew 25:37-40 NKJV

VOMC's mission is to actively remember and serve the "church persecuted." As part of this mandate, our International Ministry team has connected with ministry partners in Liberia to help support Christian children who have been abandoned by their opposing Muslim relatives for choosing to follow Jesus.

The aftereffects of abandonment can include great emotional and physical consequences. When children experience such emotional turmoil first-hand, and the resulting sudden changes that take place within their family dynamics, their sense of security and psychological well-being are deeply affected. If not properly addressed, feelings of betrayal, rejection and abandonment can eventually lead to the loss of self-esteem, anxiety and depression. In highly populated Muslim communities of Liberia – such as Bomi, Nimba and Grand Cape – Christian children tend to be very vul-

nerable to these conditions since they are most likely to experience abandonment due to their faith.

Three such children, ranging in age from nine to twelve, were seen digging sand for a construction site. When these children were interviewed by our ministry partners, they informed the counsellors that, because they go to church on Sundays, their parents had put them out of their homes. When asked where they sleep, one of the children answered, "We sleep under a table in the market building or sometimes under bridges."

Family neglect is a serious problem in the country's Muslim-dominated areas for various reasons. When self-seeking men become interested in a new personal relationship, they subsequently forget all about the wives they've rejected; mothers who are left struggling to support children on their own. Many of these

...continued from page 13

women were forsaken due to their association with the Christian faith or for attending a Christian church. Even though their jobs involve difficult manual labour (such as rock-crushing, farming and sand mining), they are barely able to eke out a daily living and sufficiently provide for their growing children.

Other mothers of persecuted children felt they had no other option but to agree with their Muslim husbands to kick their children out of the house. These men did not have any formal education and likewise had to depend on low-paying manual jobs to survive. They felt justified in their harsh parenting decisions, stating that the children had disobeyed the Islamic faith by becoming Christians.

The abandoned children are then left at the mercy of their community members or other families to provide for their basic practical needs. However, it is not only essential that their physical needs be met, but also their emotional and spiritual needs. Thanks to the intervention of VOMC's in-country ministry partners, these abandoned Christian children are receiving the compassionate care, nourishment, counsel, education, and necessary resources to help them navigate through these challenging

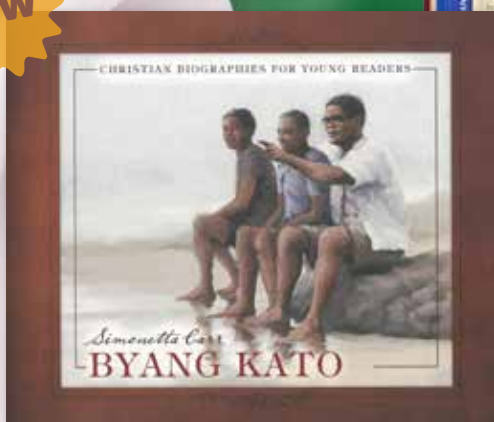
times and thrive holistically. Most importantly, they are being reassured of their Heavenly Father's great love for them.

Please pray for these rescued abandoned children in Liberia and others who are experiencing persecution due to their faith in Jesus. May they hold fast to the confession of their hope and faith in Christ Jesus, becoming strong witnesses to others around them – including the opposing members of their families. *"...Jesus called the children to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these'"* (Luke 18:16 NIVUK). 🙏



Photo: VOM Canada

NEW



Byang Kato Illustrated Biography Book

\$20

Byang Kato grew up in a Nigerian family that was devoted to juju, a religion steeped in superstition and mystic rituals. From a young age, he planned to become a juju priest. Yet, everything changed when Byang encountered the Gospel message through Christian missionaries.

In this wonderfully illustrated children's book, author Simonetta Carr describes how the eager youth devoted himself to learning about Jesus and sharing his newfound faith with others. Young readers, as well as their families and educators, will learn how God mightily used this dedicated Nigerian follower of Christ to pastor churches, teach at Bible schools, and encourage numerous other people – far and wide – through his inspirational teachings and writings. As a result of Byang's leadership, many in Africa and beyond have discovered their true identity in Christ.

Hardcover, 64 pages

The following message has been taken from VOM Canada's devotional book, "From Under the Altar." See www.vomcanada.com/store for more information.

COUNT IT ALL

Joy!

By Paul Mercer
Board Chair for Mission Eurasia Canada

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

JAMES 1:2-4 ESV

My wife and I were invited to travel to Mali from Cote d'Ivoire to speak, encourage, and provide Bibles to internally displaced people (IDP). They had been driven out of their homes in the city of Timbuktu, northern Mali, and forcefully relocated to Bamako, the capital city in the south.

Al-Qaeda terrorists had taken over the northern regions of Mali and, instead of executing the Christians living there, they loaded them onto buses and sent them south. Someone told me that 150 people were crowded onto a 50-seat bus.

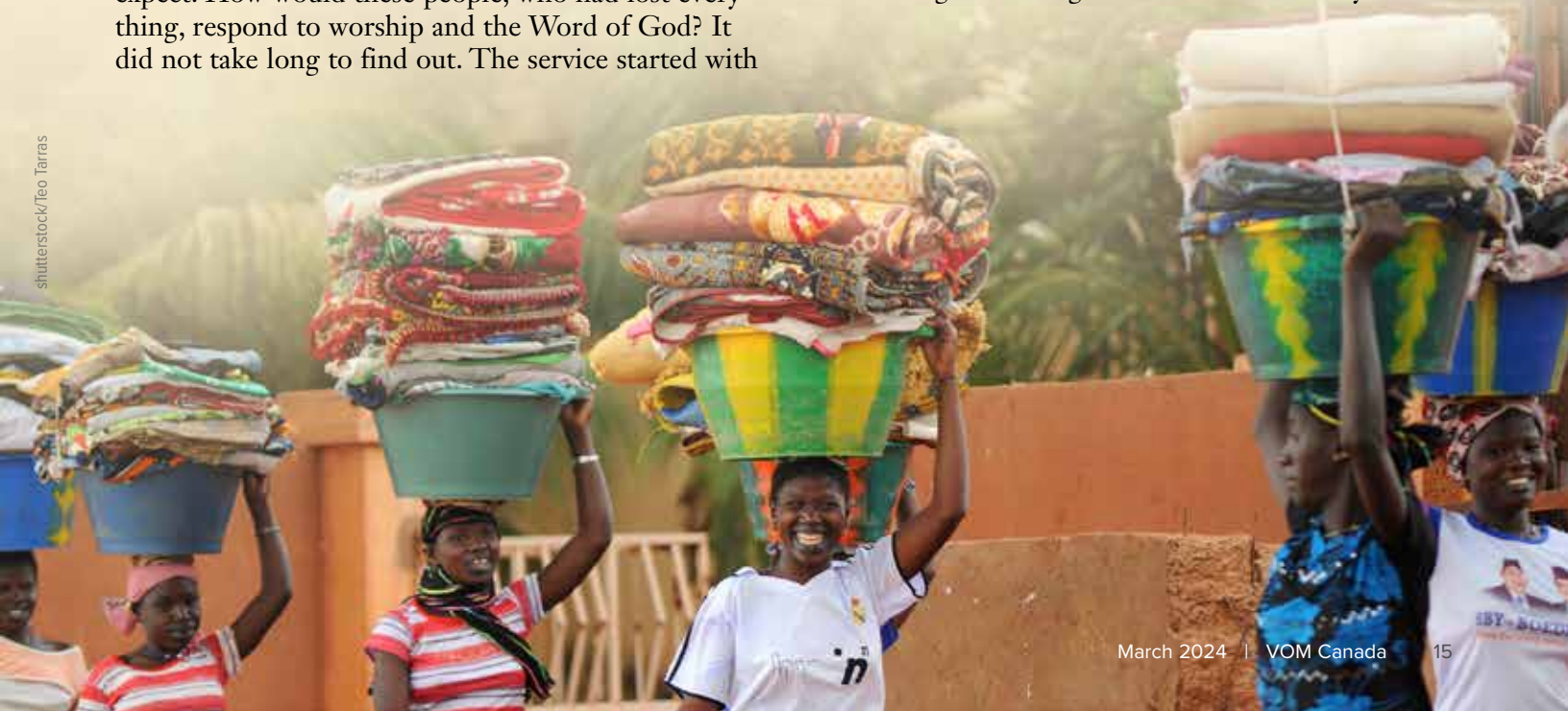
The terrorists destroyed churches and took everything that the Christians owned – all their homes, cars, money, and other belongings. The displaced believers were only allowed to take a small bag with them to Bamako, where the IDP camp was set up. This camp included a church, where we were invited to speak.

As we approached the church, I wondered what to expect. How would these people, who had lost everything, respond to worship and the Word of God? It did not take long to find out. The service started with

joyous singing and dancing; with continual praises to God for His faithfulness and ever-abiding presence in their lives.

Shouts of "Hallelujah!" and "Praise the Lord!" peppered the preaching. An overwhelming sense of joy pervaded the makeshift chapel. I was immediately reminded of James 1:2, which begins, "Count it all joy..." I felt the emotion of their infectious, unbridled, joyful praise; but I also felt humbled, ashamed, and convicted that physical circumstances and possessions had clouded my understanding of true joy. These believers, who had lost everything but Christ, understood that God alone was their source of life and all-sufficiency.

There was no place for lukewarm Christianity in this region. The decision was to be either hot or cold for Jesus. Period. However, once that choice was made, the joy of the Lord became their superpower. Remaining steadfast through their trials, they truly were lacking in nothing! I want to live that way! 🙌



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